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Subj:  Contract proposal - Commo

1. This proposal sounds kinda soft ... but the cost is low enough and the equipment testing function sufficiently valid that I guess we should recommend approval ... based in some measure on Commo's wanting this test capability enough to put these papers together. (However, one ethical question should be answered if we're to supply a computer to the contractor: - Is it kosher for the government to pay for quality control equipment used by the manufacturer in meeting the specs we are paying him to meet in the first instance?)

2. In isolation, this is too small an acquisition to fuss over ... especially if cut to a single system. Cumulatively, however, it appears a problem may be building in Commo ... resulting from their habit of acquiring, task by task, small computers of several different manufacturers and sprinkling them around here and there. On the surface that may sound alright. Commo's our main laboratory for discovering the pros & cons of the small computer world ... and that has some value. But such practice tends to lead to a lot of computers which are a) used individually only a small part of the time; b) require specific knowledge to operate & program; c) real technical competence in each of these systems is not to be expected; d) the machines thus tend to be used with applications & software which are contractor developed ... which, in turn, means we're paying out premium monies to contractors all the time and that we are not really exploiting the "general purpose" or "programmable" potential of these machines. At some point in time Commo must take a serious over-all look at where it is headed in its use of computers ... to make sure "you can get there from here".

3. Perhaps IP Board should a) approve this modest request and b) ask Commo to submit a paper which addresses the above general question. (I believe Commo has been doing some thinking on this question - so a request for such a study now might be reasonably well received by OC.)

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